

Chapter 15

Supporting Millennials in Adult and Community Education Settings: Reflective Interviews With Caregivers in the Form of Parents and Guardians

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the views of parents and guardians of Millennials who took part in a clicks-and-mortar adult and community education project based around learning about local heritage and expressing understanding of it through digital and mixed media collages. Issues considered range from the built environment, with the project taking place in various settings, from community centers to church hall, through to online issues, where a dedicated resource separated from the rest of the internet was developed for exploratory learning. Parents and guardians express how they think the needs of Millennials should be taken into account in the provision of education and community activity. The chapter concludes that there are many community resources available for Millennials, but the coordination of their use is the barrier preventing Millennials having the experience of previous generations that had fulfilled teenage years.

INTRODUCTION

In the time of globalisation, especially following the migration crisis, providing culturally responsive education is essential. It can be difficult enough for an educator to manage delivering learning to classrooms consisting of learners who are homogeneous in their background, but it is possible to use technology to overcome such difficulties, even in classrooms where learners are heterogeneous (Bishop, 2004; Bishop, 2012a).

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BACKGROUND

This section provides a critical assessment of the literature related to how the two different generation of digital teens, Net Generation and Millennials, can be accommodated in the organisations, communities and family units of which they are part and how the adult and community education (ACE) environment can improve their outcomes. This is in addition to the author discussion above in relation to the author's own literature and life experience on why the author is researching "Generation Next" (i.e. the Millennials) to begin with. This thesis suggests three areas that need to be rethought to accommodate Millennials, synonymously known as Generation Next. These involve rethinking organisational and systems architecture, rethinking buildings architecture and rethinking curriculum and pedagogy architecture. But before considering these, it is essential to define the Millennials, the community education factors affecting them, and where they see themselves in their family unit.

Defining the Millennials as Generation Next

Many have tried to define the Millennials by an age range (McDonald, 2015). For instance, it has been claimed the age range is those born between 1979 and 1990 (McDonald, 2015). But that would include the author, who cannot be a Millennial because despite having access to the latest technologies, such as mobile phones and tablets, those whom one might call their "peers" or "compatriots" had no interest in adopting these technologies when the author was growing up at the same time as them. Some have tried creative definitions, such as "the generation born between 1981 and 2000 who grew up during the global financial crisis and graduated into the subsequent recession" (Allman & McCormack, 2017).

Simple definitions of Millennials have included 'non-rebellious' (Pinson, 2012), being "glued to smartphones" (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015) and 'non-passive' (Gullö, 2009). However, there will be people from other generations whom identify with these labels and Millennials who do not. A sensible definition of a Millennial might therefore include "those born in the approximately two decades prior to the turn of the millennium, i.e., when they were approximately in their twenties—plus or minus a few years" (Cutler, 2015) so long as added to it is that Millennials are digital natives and that just because someone was born around this time does not automatically qualify them to be a Millennial unless they are also what the author calls Generation Next.

By Generation Next, the author means those who want to express their identity through the latest technologies without waiting for others to catch up with the latest trends. Once they've mastered a computer game, they want another one. The school system that exists, which extends the same topics out over an entire term, semester or year is boring and irrelevant (Davidson, 2011). It is intended through the study in this thesis to develop a distinction between someone who is being a Millennial and very similar to the Net Generation and when they are being Generation Next.

Considering Community Education Factors

Education is a social process and one from which higher order thinking can develop (Vygotsky, 1930). Outcomes for younger generations can improve if communities work with schools to achieve this (Lonsdale, 2009). Raising the age of education for young people would improve their outcomes and could encourage participation in adult and community education (ACE) in particular (Lambert, Maylor, & Coughlin, 2015; Simmons & Thompson, 2013), which is the type of education investigated by this thesis.

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